

Staff Report



To	City Council
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Environment
Date	Tuesday, February 11, 2025
Subject	Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection Initial Business Case and Concept Design

Recommendation

1. That Report 2025-16 Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection Initial Business Case and Concept Design be received.
 2. That Mayor Guthrie submit a letter to Metrolinx, on behalf of the City of Guelph, supporting the Initial Business Case in principle.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The Region of Waterloo has completed an Initial Business Case (IBC) to connect Cambridge to Toronto (Union Station) via a passenger rail service between Cambridge and Guelph. Region of Waterloo Council unanimously supported the project and have asked area municipal partners to create a unified voice of support.

Key Findings

This Region of Waterloo IBC aligns with Guelph’s Strategic Plan, Transportation Master Plan and Guelph Transit’s Future Ready Action Plan.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This report and recommendations align with the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan Future Guelph by supporting the building of a transportation system that works for everyone in our community and offers a variety of travel options to suit different needs and abilities.

Future Guelph Theme

City Building

Future Guelph Objectives

City Building: Make it easier to get around

Financial Implications

None

Report

Beginning in 2009, the Region of Waterloo has completed a variety of studies to connect Cambridge to Toronto Union Station with a passenger rail service. A direct route using Canadian Pacific Kansas City Limited (CPKC) owned tracks from Galt to Union Station by extending service along GO's Milton line has significant implementation barriers related to track sharing with freight service according to a 2014 report. As a result, Region staff explored using a lightly used CN freight line, known as the Fergus subdivision, between north Cambridge (Pinebush Road) and Guelph (Alma Street) to connect to GO's Kitchener line at Guelph Central Station.

The [IBC](#) completed in 2024 finds that, on the basis of the strategic, economic, financial and delivery and operations cases, the Cambridge Passenger Rail project should proceed (section 8.2).

Guelph transportation staff have been municipal partners throughout this project, along with staff from County of Wellington, Guelph-Eramosa Township, Woolwich Township and City of Cambridge.

This IBC and potential passenger rail service aligns with the City's Transportation Master Plan section 3.2.3 "The City will continue to work with involved railway companies and other levels of government to increase the availability of inter-city passenger rail transportation for Guelph."

This IBC also aligns with the proposed introduction of transit service between Guelph and Cambridge in Guelph Transit's Future Ready Action Plan.

The proposed service utilizes existing railway tracks in Guelph as shown in Attachment-1. The service would use the tracks already used by GO passenger trains between Guelph Central Station and Alma Street, then branching off southwesterly using CN's freight line which roughly parallels Wellington Street West to the City limits.

There are no proposals for additional stations in Guelph, with the only other station being at Pinebush Road/Eagle Street at Hespeler Road in Cambridge.

Based on available information in the IBC, the proposed additional trains on the Fergus Subdivision and the Metrolinx line do not trigger any new grade separation projects at existing at-grade crossings in Guelph.

City staff will continue to participate in the feasibility and planning process to monitor progress and evaluate any ongoing impacts and benefits for the City. As the project progresses, any ongoing needs for project specific advocacy will be evaluated and undertaken as needed in partnership with the City's Policy and Intergovernmental Relations team.

City staff will also continue to keep Mayor and Council updated on this proposal when new information is available.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this IBC. The recommendation from the IBC requests the Province of Ontario to fund construction and operation of this proposed service. If future costs to Guelph are identified, they will be reported under separate cover for future council consideration.

Consultations and Engagement

The Region of Waterloo project team held an Open House at Guelph City Hall regarding this IBC on Thursday, March 21, 2024.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Map of Service Area

Attachment-2 Region of Waterloo staff presentation

Departmental Approval

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